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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000198

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: ETHNIC ALBANIAN PARTY EXITS GOVERNMENT

REF: SKOPJE 194

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) Ethnic Albanian junior coalition partner DPA announced March 12 that it would leave the government, citing the failure of PM Gruevski to meet six key DPA demands. Although the DPA exit robs Gruevski of his majority in the parliament, it is likely that the government will wobble but not fall. There is increasing political support for reaching a settlement of the name dispute with Greece, so even without a parliamentary majority Gruevski might still be able to reach a deal that lets Macedonia receive a NATO invitation (reftel). End summary.

DPA LEAVES GOVERNING COALITION

12. (SBU) As anticipated in reftel, ethnic Albanian junior coalition partner DPA announced late the evening of March 12 that it was leaving the multi-ethnic governing coalition of Prime Minister Gruevski (VMRO). DPA President Thaci cited Gruevski's failure to meet six key DPA demands (a language law, expeditious recognition of Kosovo, use of the Albanian national flag in municipalities, and several others) and the PM's refusal to negotiate seriously on the name dispute with Greece as reasons for the party's departure from government. Following the DPA Presidency Council's March 12 endorsement of Thaci's proposal to exit the coalition, the party's Central Board is expected to rubber-stamp the decision on March 13.

GOVERNMENT STILL STANDING

13. (SBU) Government contacts and a high-ranking VMRO MP assert that DPA's resignation from the coalition is unlikely to "lead to any dramatic changes." According to their analyses, even without a parliamentary majority, the current government could still perform day-to-day technical functions, with deputy ministers loyal to Gruevski's VMRO party filling posts vacated by the six DPA ministers currently in place.

14. (SBU) Comment: This scenario, which would minimize outside perceptions of political instability in Macedonia, also would allow DPA to avoid being blamed by its eAlbanian electorate

for failing to accomplish its electoral promises. If the Gruevski government fails to resolve the name dispute with Greece and Athens vetoes Macedonia's NATO membership, the scenario also would allow DPA to compete with a clean slate in early elections -- likely to be announced after the NATO Summit and held in the summer. For Gruevski and his VMRO party, the scenario would clear the way for early elections after Bucharest and free them of their ties to Thaci, widely viewed in VMRO as an erratic and difficult coalition partner.
End comment.

NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE UNLIKELY

15. (SBU) Opposition MPs could call for a vote of no-confidence in the government, which requires a majority vote to pass. If successful, that would result in the dissolution of the government (but not of Parliament) and the formation of a new ruling coalition. This scenario is not likely because it requires serious coalition-building in a short timeframe at a moment when most parties are focused on Macedonia's top priority: resolving the name dispute with Greece and joining NATO. SDSM, the largest opposition party in parliament, has told us they will not initiate a vote of no-confidence against Gruevski. They would rather see a "functional government" remain in place to work on the name issue and Macedonia's NATO candidacy, at least until the Bucharest Summit.

PM NOT LIKELY TO RESIGN

16. (SBU) Under the Constitution, PM Gruevski also could

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voluntarily resign and dismiss his cabinet. Once that happened, President Crvenkovski could then offer the mandate to a broad coalition of parties to form a caretaker government. In this scenario, however, Gruevski gives up the chance to call early elections (after Bucharest) which, given his high poll ratings, probably would return him to office with a strong VMRO majority. He therefore is unlikely to even consider resigning, which would cede the playing field to DPA and the political opposition.

COMMENT

17. (C) Thaci knows Gruevski plans early elections after the NATO Summit, regardless of whether Macedonia receives a membership invitation. As a result, the DPA leader is covering his flanks by abandoning ship just before Bucharest, hoping that his six-point list of demands will resonate with an eAlbanian electorate that has yet to see him deliver much on earlier campaign promises.

18. (C) For the moment, it appears that the government will hobble along without DPA. PM Gruevski may actually gain political room for maneuver on the name issue, however. If he does not like a potential deal with Greece, he can claim his hands are tied without a parliamentary majority. If an acceptable deal lands on the table, he can cover himself by insisting that the opposition parties join in supporting it in order to ensure a NATO invitation in April.

NAVRATIL